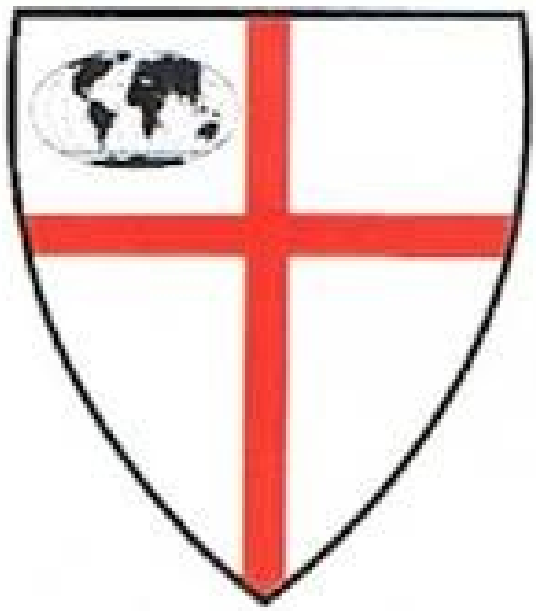
Honor your father and mother

On Trinity III 06/21/2026

Anglican Church International



By

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Abstract

This reflection on Trinity III takes the apparent tension between the Fifth Commandment ("Honor your father and mother") and the Gospel's hard saying ("Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me") as the occasion for working out what it means to make God the ultimate final end of human life. The argument proceeds from Romans 6 through the Gospel saying to a conclusion that is at once theological, metaphysical, and pastoral: putting God first is not a duty imposed from outside but the inner logic of unconditionally loving the Source of all being. To love the Source unconditionally is to love what the Source loves as the Source loves it, which secures rather than negates the intrinsic value of created persons. Loving father, mother, son, and daughter is therefore not derivative from the love of God, nor a means to it, but the very form love of God takes when the Source's beloved creatures are present. The Isaiah 58 fast — "not hiding from our own kin" — names this in lived practice. To unconditionally love and serve others just is what it is to make Christ one's sure foundation, and theirs: "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10.39, NRSV).

Abstract by
Perplexity Computer (Claude Sonnet 4.6)
in conversation with The Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael W. Holland

21 June 2026

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Happy Father's Day!

Last Sunday I have spoke of the free gift given us by God of His grace through Christ, namely, the Holy Spirit. When I have done so, often, a central topic then was what it is to be justified by faith with respect to that gift. We have been given the free gift of the Grace of God in Christ by whom the trespasses of many are forgiven, by whom the many are justified and given the possibility of life and becoming righteous by the sacrifice of the One – Christ. Christ is our redeemer, we are forgiven our sins, thus justified and given the possibility of life and becoming/sharing in righteousness through/with Him.

But that we are justified by faith does not entail that we need do nothing. For it is through our acts that we become like Christ – thus fulfilling our nature and living – that is, our acts of answering His call. The opposite is true. Difficult obstacles we must endure by faith. For we also have the possibility to destroy ourselves, our souls and bodies, by not answering His call, thus not fulfilling our nature and dying. The good news is that if we fail to fulfill our nature, by faith in Christ, we can always turn to Him, and through Him be forgiven and live. For God's love for us is unconditional and He is always with us in Christ.

This Sunday we have St. Paul telling us what it is to accept that free gift from God in Christ which we do in Baptism. As Christ died to sin the one full and perfect sacrifice and rose again conquering/overcoming and lives to God, so we in Baptism die to sin and rise and are alive to God, a new creation in Christ here and now and hereafter.

Let us consider the here and now. What is it to be alive to God in Christ? We have at least part of the answer in the Gospel, "Whoever love father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10.37–38, NRSV). But what does this mean? At least one thing seems clear, namely, first things first, and, God is first.

What, then, is it to make God first in our Lives? It is to die to serving self or anything else other than God as our ultimate end – that which is done for its own sake and for no other reason and provides unity to all our endeavors – and being born to life by living to serve God - serving God being the ultimate end in itself. It is to die to sin – separating ourselves from God by placing other things above God, having serving ourselves or our mother or our father, son or daughters or anything else other than God

as our ultimate end; and, living to God by making serving Him our ultimate end.

Notably, in the Old Testament reading for today we have an example of this, namely, Abraham sending His son and his son's mother away. By the way, what do you think of Sarah's request that he do this? What about God's telling Abraham to honor her request? Note, however, God provided for Abraham's son.

Making God first in our lives involves each of us taking up our cross and following Christ. What is it to do this? I believe taking up the cross can be seen as answering our call and we are called to follow Christ by proclaiming the good news, showing the cross to all - the cross being a symbol of that good news – that no one need die, for life is found in serving God in Christ through following Him by faith.

Following Christ entails doing as He did, by unconditionally loving and serving all we encounter – including, notably, our father, mother, son and daughter. Unconditionally loving and thus serving others involves making others welcome in our lives, not hiding from our own kin . And each time we make others welcome in our lives we are at once accepting Christ in our lives, (i.e., as we did at Baptism, dying to sin, dying to placing anything else other than serving God as our ultimate end, and living to God, reconciling with Him, joining Him through Christ), **and,** proclaiming the good news, (i.e., that all can do the same and find life in Christ). For God turns no one away. This is the Good News which we are called to proclaim in our everydayness, (e.g., at work, with friends, with family, etc.) by how we are in the world.

And nothing but life itself here and now hangs in the balance of our living to God by taking up our cross and following Christ. For, when we live to God, defining our being in the world by making serving Him in Christ our ultimate end, which is to say, when we take up our cross and follow Christ, serving God by unconditionally loving and serving all we encounter as Christ unconditionally loves and serves us – thus making Christ our sure foundation and others' sure foundation by our so loving and serving them – we become like Christ thus fulfilling our nature and live. When we do not do this by, for example, by making ourselves our ultimate end, saving our lives our ultimate end we do not become like Christ, and do not fulfill our nature and die. And so we have, **"Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10.39, NRSV).**

Let us pray,

As we go about our week may the Lord make us have perpetual love and reverence for your holy Name and know by faith you never fail to help and govern those whom you have **set upon the sure foundation of your**

lovingkindness, by your grace we may find life in Christ. ***Amen.***

Works Cited

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha. New Revised Standard Version. 4th ed., edited by Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins, Oxford University Press, 2010.